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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PK, AF, UR, US
SUBJECT: AFGHAN COUP: VIEW FROM QUETTA

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BEGIN SUMMARY: NEWS OF THE AFGHAN COUP SENT AN INITIAL SHOCK WAVE OF APPREHENSION THROUGH INFORMED CIRCLES IN CAPITAL OF PAKISTANI BALUCHISTAN. MOVE WIDELY SEEN AS RESULT SOVIET MANIPULATION. END SUMMARY.

1. VIEWS EXPRESSED BY WIDE VARIETY LOCAL OFFICIALS AND NON-OFFICIAL PERSONALITIES DURING MY OFFICIAL VISIT TO QUETTA 20-24 JULY INDICATE ALMOST UNIVERSAL SENSE OF SHOCK AND CONCERN OVER IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN -- AND ESPECIALLY BALUCHISTAN -- OF AFGHAN COUP. DAUD WIDELY REMEMBERED AS HARD-LINER ON PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUE, WITH ADVERSE IMPLICATIONS FOR PATHAN-MAJORITY REGIONS NORTHERN BALUCHISTAN PROVINCE. REGRET EXPRESSED AT REMOVAL OF ZAHIR SHAH, WHO CONSIDERED MODERATING INFLUENCE IN TERMS PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUE.

2. MAJORITY OBSERVERS TOOK FOR GRANTED THAT COUP WAS RESULT SOVIET MANIPULATION AND PRESSURE. SEVERAL VIEWED COUP AS SOVIET ANSWER TO INCREASING SIGNS DEVELOPING CHINESE-IRANIAN-PAKISTANI-ARABIAN PENINSULA AXIS, WITH U.S. SUPPORT. FACTORS CITED IN THIS CONNECTION WERE: JUNE CENTO MEETING; PENDING U.S. ARMS SALES TO IRAN, KUWAIT, SAUDI ARABIA; SHAH'S RECENT FORTHRIGHT STATEMENTS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER EHUTTO MAY VISIT TO TEHRAN; SOVIET DISAPPOINTMENT WITH RESULTS ROSEYGA MARCH VISIT TO IRAN AND PODGORNY MAY VISIT TO KABUL; CHINESE FORMIN JUNE VISIT TO TEHRAN; AND SCHEDULING OF EHUTTO AND SHAH VISITS TO WASHINGTON BACK-TO-BACK IN JULY. SOME SPECULATED THAT

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BREZHNEV HAD RECEIVED IMPRESSION DURING WASHINGTON SUMMIT OF U.S. WAR WEARINESS AND PREOCCUPATION WITH DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, AND THEREFORE CONCLUDED THIS SAFE TIME TAKE MAJOR STEP TO BOLSTER SOVIET POSITION IN SOUTH ASIA AND PERSIAN GULF REGION.

3. ONLY CONTRARY VIEWS HEARD WERE THOSE OF NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY REPS AND SYMPATHIZERS. THEIR COMMENTS WERE GUARDED, BUT MENTIONED, INTER ALIA, THAT "COMMON PEOPLE" OF BALUCHISTAN VIEWED COUP WITH FAVOR BECAUSE OF THEIR NATURAL PREFERENCE FOR A "DEMOCRATIC LEADER" AS OPPOSED TO A "DESPOTIC KING" SUCH AS ZAHIR SHAH. SUCH A NAP FORMULATION WAS FAR FROM THE CLAIM OF NAP DETRACTORS THAT THIS OPPOSITION PARTY WAS "JUBILANT" OVER PROSPECT OF NEW ANTI-PAKISTANI AFGHAN REGIME, BUT DID SUGGEST POSSIBLE EMERGENCE OF ANOTHER STICK -- NOT UNLIKE THE FEBRUARY IRAQI ARMS COUP -- FOR THE REGIME TO USE IN BEATING THE NAP.

4. AS NEARLY AS I COULD TELL FROM INFORMAL SQUADINGS, THROUGH INTERMEDIARIES, OF POLYGLOT, LARGELY NON-BALUCH QUETTA BAZAAR OPINION, "COMMON MAN'S" VIEWS THERE ARE CLOSER TO GOVERNMENT'S THAN TO NAP'S. INDICATIVE OF WISHFUL THINKING WAS RUMOR RAMPANT IN QUETTA BAZAAR 19 AND 20 JULY TO EFFECT DAUD'S WIFE, OUT OF LOYALTY TO HER BROTHER ZAHIR SHAH, HAD MURDERED HER HUSBAND. (QUETTA PROVIDES NO GUIDE TO RURAL BALUCH OPINION.)

5. COMMENT: THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT SOME OF MY CONTACTS EXAGGERATED THEIR FEAR OF THE SOVIET HAND IN AFGHAN COUP FOR MY BENEFIT IN ORDER TO PUSH CASE FOR STRONGER U.S. SUPPORT FOR COUNTRIES IN THIS REGION THREATENED BY ALLEGED SOVIET MACHINATIONS. BUT EVEN ALLOWING FOR DISTORTION ALONG THESE LINES, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT PREVAILING INITIAL REACTION IN CAPITAL OF PAKISTANI BALUCHISTAN WAS SOMETHING OF A SHOCK WAVE OF APPREHENSION.

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